

From: Dr. John Roddam <johnwrroddam@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, August 21, 2025 5:35 PM
To: Tim Taylor <commander@kingdomleague.org>
Subject: Fwd: Covenant: Seattle Presbytery

From: Jim Watt <jmbetter@gmail.com>
Subject: Covenant: Seattle Presbytery
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To: jmbetter@skagitattic.com

“TWO ARE BETTER THAN ONE” MINISTRIES

Jim & Marie Watt

Tel: 253-517-9195 - **Email:** jmbetter@gmail.com

Web: www.2rbetter.org

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COVENANT: SEATTLE PRESBYTERY – JUNE 1971

HISTORY

In 1971 a group of Seattle pastors under the leadership of Dennis Bennett of St. Luke’s Episcopal Church – convened a conference composed of 30 North American traveling 5-fold ministries, with a core group of 8 local pastors.

Father Bennett had been ministering in Florida earlier in the year. As he and Bob Mumford had fellowship, Bob mentioned a serious problem. Many of these traveling ministries did not know each other, and found it easy to bad-mouth one another behind the back of the one referred to. This often took place both privately and publicly.

It was Bob's belief, that if these men could meet for a week with one another in closed session – it would then be more difficult to speak disparagingly of one another in their absence.

Dennis told Bob of the Seattle pastors who were then meeting on a monthly basis – some 30 or so in number. He felt they would take this challenge, and play host for such a conference.

In January of 1971 the Seattle men unanimously accepted this challenge; and believed God to meet a normal weekly honorarium for each of the 30 traveling ministries, plus their full travel expenses, as well as their room and board while in Seattle.

Morning and afternoon for 10 sessions, Dennis chaired these closed meetings. Some dozen subjects came under scrutiny and discussion – but the most important subject centered on interpersonal relationships and problems – and how scripturally to address it.

Derek Prince presented a paper in 8 parts entitled “Covenant: Seattle Presbytery.” After serious discussion, it was accepted and signed by both the 30 delegates, and later by many other pastors in the SeaTac Metroplex.

In the 1700's John Wesley prepared 52 sermons to train his Class Leaders of 8, who led some 70,000 at that time in weekly meetings in the British Isles. Later Lenin copied the Class Meeting concept and adapted it to Communist Cell Meetings. An English Sociologist of that day – not a Christian believer – stated emphatically, that apart from the Weekly Class Meetings inaugurated by the Wesleys – Great Britain would have experienced in a similar fashion what took place in the French Revolution of 1789.

John Wesley's classic sermon on Matthew 18:15-17 was entitled, “The Cure of Evil Speaking.” Here is his definition – Any person who speaks of an absent brother in a derogatory manner, engages in “Evil Speaking.”

It is all too easy to use E-mails today in this manner, and thus violate the first commandment that Jesus gave the church, and the one we most often disobey and break

Following is the article Derek Prince prepared for Seattle in June of 1971. (I am reproducing this on "Word Processor" at the request of a present day local pastor.) -- Jim Watt

COVENANT: SEATTLE PRESBYTERY – JUNE 1971

1. We whose names are signed below believe that God has set us as leaders within the body of Christ in our area. We will respect the others whose names are signed below. (A: 1 Corinthians 12:12-28; Psalm 133.)

2. If at any time we have any criticism or complaint against any of the others, we will take the steps prescribed in Matthew 18:15-17 to retain the fellowship of our brothers: first, go to the person alone; second, if necessary, go to him with two or more witnesses; third, if necessary, bring the matter before the whole group. Thereafter, we will abide by any decision reached by the whole group. (B: Exodus 23:1; Leviticus 19:16; Psalm 15:3; Proverbs 6:16, 19; 20:19; 26:20; James 3:1-10).

3. If another person brings to us any criticism or complaint against any of those whose names are signed below, we will direct that person to take the steps prescribed in Matthew 18:15-17. If the situation requires, we will be willing to go with that person as a witness. We will not entertain any criticism or complaint against any of the others whose names are signed below, except in the presence of the one against whom the criticism or complaint is made. (B: above).

4. We will also respect all other leaders within the body of Christ in our area, upon two conditions: first, that we recognize their lives and ministries as being morally and ethically sound (C: 1 Timothy 1:3-4; 2 Timothy 2:19-22; Titus 2:7-8); second that they show due respect for the scriptures (D: John 14:23-24; 2 Timothy 3:16-4:2; 1 John 2:4-5) the Lord Jesus Christ (E: John 5:22-23; 10:7-9; 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Corinthians 3:11; 8:6;

Ephesians 1:20-23; Colossians 1:18; 1 John 4:2-3); the Holy Spirit (F: John 14:16-17, 26; 16:13-14; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11); and the body of Christ (G: Matthew 18:17; 1 Timothy 3:14-15; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 5:12-6:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24) in our area.

5. We will likewise respect any ministries whom God may from time to time direct to our area for the upbuilding of his body in our area, provided that they fulfill the two conditions stated in paragraph 4 above. (H: Matthew 10:40-41; Acts 11:22-24; 15:32-33; 18:27; 1 Corinthians 4:17; 16:10; Philippians 2:19-29; 3 John 5-8).

6. If at any time we have reason to believe that persons are seeking to minister or exercise influence within the body of Christ in our area, who do not fulfill the conditions stated in paragraph 4, we will not give our endorsement or support to their ministries or other activities, and we will notify accordingly the other leaders whose names are signed below, as well as any members of the body of Christ in our area who look to us for spiritual leadership. (I: Matthew 7:15-23; Galatians 1:8-9; 2 Timothy 3:6-9; Titus 1:9-11; 3:9-11; 2 Peter 2; 1 John 4:1-6; 2 John 7-11).

7. We agree that any one of us will no longer be recognized as a member of this group, if at any time:

(1) He voluntarily withdraws from this covenant;

(2) He moves to a place of residence outside our area;

(3) After fair and careful examination by the group it is decided that he no longer fulfills the conditions stated in paragraph 4.

8. New leaders may at any time be added to this group, or former leaders reinstated, provided that they fulfill the conditions stated in paragraph 4, and that they voluntarily and sincerely accept the commitments contained in this covenant.

(NOTE: The above principles can easily be adapted for a local congregation, especially where they apply. It would be hoped that local pastors would recognize the discipline of

their various local churches, and stand by a brother pastor or leader when discipline has been applied. Such a member should not be received by another local congregation until the problem has been made right. They can also be used as the church of Ephesus did in Revelation 2:1-7. Outside teachers who counted themselves as apostles were received on a preliminary basis subject to approval. Those who did not meet NT standards were rejected. No doubt other city churches were warned concerning these.

The last Lausanne Conference in 2010 I believe in South Africa, had a key note speaker from an area of NY City. He said God was not in these last days going to use nations such as the US and Canada to bring back His Son. Instead, He was going to use "City Churches" to do so. The 7 churches of Revelation tend to confirm this. 5 key cities in Canada are moving in this direction, and 4 in Cascadia (the Pacific NW).

In the light of this, the 1971 Covenant from Seattle could be of significance. George Whitefield produced city cell groups of this nature 18 months preceding John Wesley, and founded the first Wesleyan movement - again preceding the Wesleys, with emphasis more on the Sovereignty of God than on the free-will of man.) - J.A.Watt